



Questioning Proposals for Urban Public Space

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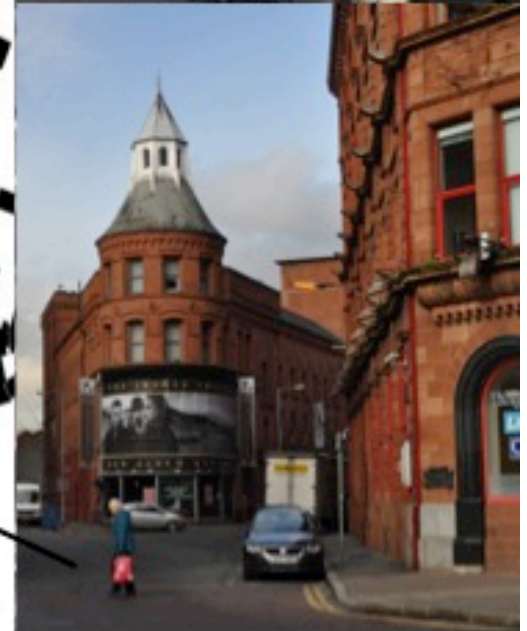
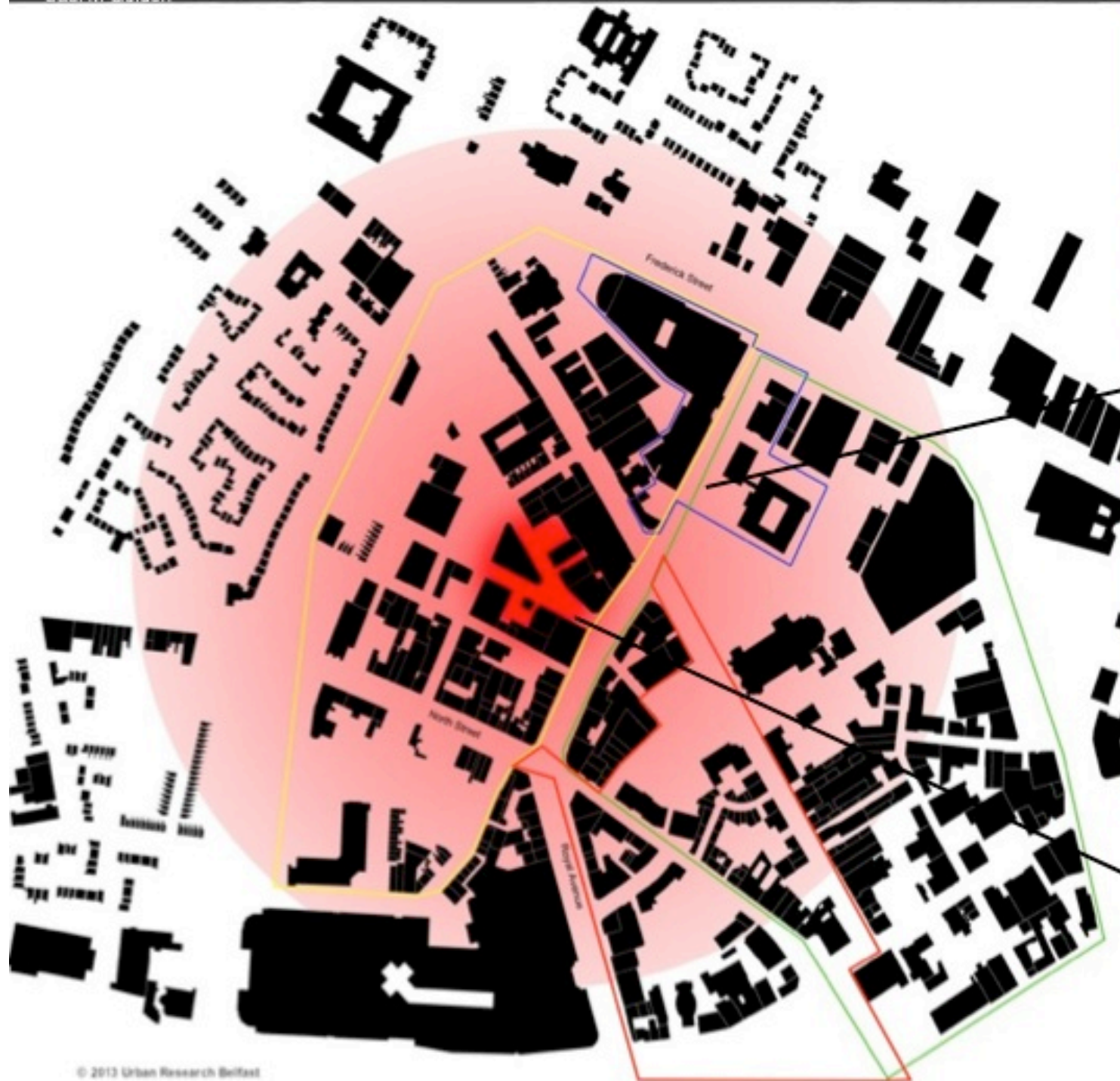
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Future of Places 2013

**Library Square, Belfast
Questioning Proposals for
Urban Public Space**

Urban Research Belfast 2013





CONTEXT:
Belfast City Centre



PROBLEMS OF THE CITY:
Poor quality public space



- A A Unique Street Paving Pattern
- B Decorative Spiralling
Typographic Montage
Incorporated Into The Street
Paving Pattern
- C Sculptural Graphic 'Word' Trees
- D Kiosks
- E Permanent Seating 'letter
stamps' Tables And Chairs
Throughout The Square
- F Aqua Graphic Fountain
- G Temporary Screen Wall
Concealing The Barren Side
Entrance To The Library
Extension.
- H Wi-Fi Hot Spots Throughout



£3million Design, Dept. of Social Development NI, 2012

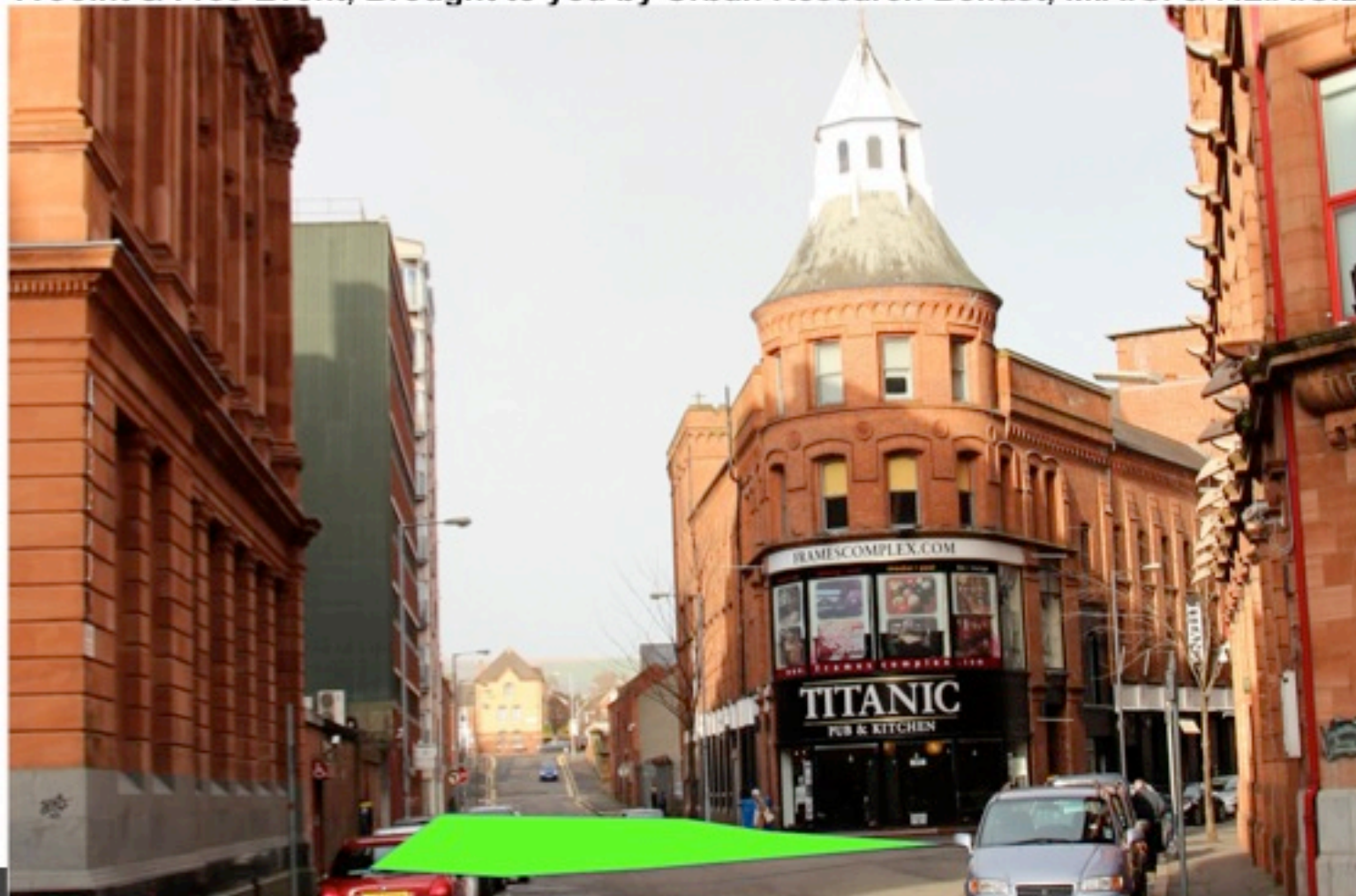
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SMITHFIELD & UNION "LIBRARY SQUARE"

THURSDAY 21ST FEBRUARY, 1-3PM, LIBRARY STREET

Activate this Important Space in the City with Music, Poetry, Games, Conversation.

Demonstrating "Lighter Quicker Cheaper" Urbanism in Belfast. Give your Feedback.
A Joint & Free Event, Brought to you by Urban Research Belfast, M.A.G. & P.L.A.C.E.





SHORT-TERM COLLABORATIVE EXPERIMENTS IN PLACEMAKING



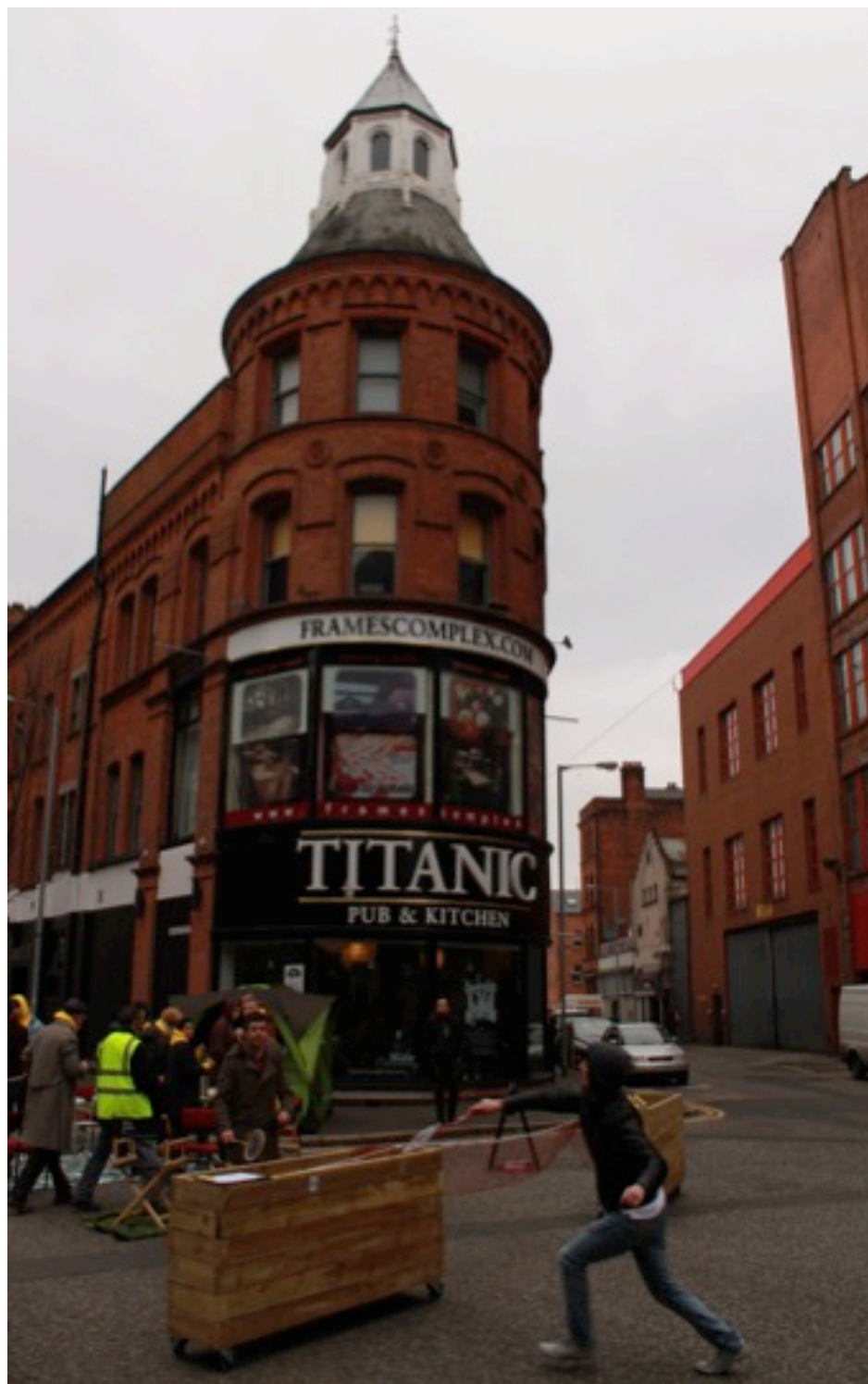


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2 March 2013

FEATURE

North Belfast News | 19

Crazy paving areas that could transform city

*'Pop-up' green space in city
a glimpse of what could be*

BY EVAN SHORT
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A last minute bid to influence the changing face of Belfast was made last week by building campaigners who say they want to see more innovative thinking in how the city is regenerated.

And to drive home their point that the future of the city lies not in fancy paving but in more green spaces they blocked off a city centre road to display what their vision would look like.

Led by University of Ulster lecturer Saul Golden and Arthur Acheson from architect firm The Boyd Partnership, a street adjacent to the Frames Complex was sealed off by the PSNI last Thursday (February 20) to facilitate the academics and campaigners in transforming the area into a cultural space. This, they said, was to show what could be achieved if the city council were to approach planning differently.

Street artists were joined

by students taking part in outdoor tutorials and fake grass was laid down to demonstrate that regeneration does not equal concrete.

Blocking roads in Belfast is a stressful business even in the most positive circumstances, but any panic being felt by Saul on this cold Thursday afternoon was well hidden. Standing in the midst of artists, students and academics in his high viz jacket, the American was the 'go to' guy to find out what was going on.

Patiently answering all sorts of questions from passers-by in his soft accent, he came across more as an interested tour guide than a senior lecturer.

But here was a university don who actively sought to leave his office to block a road in Belfast to engage the public – a rare example of energy in Irish academia. However this enthusiasm visibly drains when he describes what the current plans are for this historic part of Belfast.

"They want to build a big



Artist Jane Bulter who joined campaigners taking part in outdoor tutorials around the frames complex last week. Fake grass was laid down in the area to demonstrate that regeneration does not equal concrete

wall here," he says, gesturing in the direction of the Belfast Central Library that dominates the small square.

This, he says, is an example of how conventional thinking is failing to take advantage of Belfast's potential.

"Maybe those funds could be better spent at street level to maybe open up a café. For example, the library has a

café which has existing members who are old, young, all sorts of ages and genders and they could come outside and enjoy this space."

Saul envisages the area as a kind of oasis that would be claimed by office workers and residents alike.

"Maybe some sort of initiative could be established to spend money on working

in partnerships outside the boundaries of traditional development. So in this instance we could work with the library and the Belfast Telegraph who might play a part, or the Titanic Pub could get involved. By doing that it would be an investment so much bigger than saying, 'lets put in some sculpture, lets put in some kiosks and people will come'."

For Arthur Acheson what they are trying to achieve can be best summed up in a neat metaphor.

"The best way to think about this is that the space would be your iPhone and what you bring to it is the app.

"The question is do you spend some money on 'software' or do you spend all the money on the 'hardware' – the paving?

"Would you play a game of badminton? would you have a wee game of something for the children? Would you have a cup of tea? Would you come out and eat your lunch? Even on a February day you can wrap up warm. We have even put up a tent to see if a kiosk would work."

In just one afternoon without any publicity, Arthur said they were able to attract attention to the space.

"The (Titanic) bar here

provided us with sandwiches and coffee and the Shalom House Writers' Group saw what we were doing after their class in the Central Library and gave a poetry reading.

"It's working well and it's not even a warm day," he said.

Breaking away from her open air tutorial class, graduate student Alison Elliot said it was striking how few green areas were open for public use in the city centre.

"There are very few green spaces for the population and the regeneration going on doesn't seem to be improving that. If this space was developed into a green area then it would be possible to perhaps connect with the wider community."

Fellow class member Claire McAteer said Belfast could learn a lot from other European cities.

"We are just back from Berlin where we were finding out how they use green space and how we can put into practice what they have learned over the years."

Ahead of the closing date for submissions, Arthur said he hoped their 'pop-up' green space would inspire people to take part and try to influence planners.



Future Lessons from Empty Space: Urban Research Belfast
Inter-Disciplinary Investigation, Experiments, & Intervention

Saul M Golden
University of Ulster